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THE HISTORY OF A FOSSIL.

TUGH MILLER, in his "Cruise of the Betsey"—a volume of his contributions to the *Witness* newspaper—tells the story of a fossil in this wise :

"Thomas Campbell, when asked for a toast in a society of authors, gave 'The memory of Napoleon Bonaparte;' significantly adding, 'he once hung a book-seller.' On a nearly similar principle I would be disposed to propose among geologists a grateful bumper in honor of the revolutionary army that besieged Maestricht. That city, some seventy-five or eighty years ago, had its zealous naturalist in the person of M. Hoffmann, a diligent excavator in the quarries of St. Peter's mountain, long celebrated for its extraordinary fossils. Geology, as a science, had no existence at the time; but Hoffmann was doing, in a quiet way, all he could to give it a beginning; he was transferring from the rock to his cabinet, shells, and corals, and crustacea, and the teeth and scales of fishes, with now and then the vertebræ, and now and then the limb-bone of a reptile. And as he honestly remunerated all the workmen he employed, and did no manner of harm to any one, no one heeded him. On one eventful morning, however, his friends, the quarriers, laid bare a most extraordinary fossil—the occipital plates of an enormous saurian, with jaws four and a half feet long, bristling over with teeth, like *chevaux de frise*; and after Hoffmann, who got the block in which it lay embedded, cut out entire, and transferred to his house, had spent week after week in painfully relieving it from the mass, all Maestricht began to speak of it as something really wonderful. There is a cathedral on St. Peter's mountain—the mountain itself is church land; and the lazy canon, awakened by the general talk, laid claim to poor Hoffmann's wonderful fossil as *his* property. He was lord of the manor, he said, and the mountain and all that it contained belonged to him. Hoffmann defended his fossil as he best could in an expensive law-suit; but the judges found the law clean against him: the huge reptile head was declared to be 'treasure trove' escheated to the lord of the manor; and Hoffmann, half broken-hearted, with but his labor and the lawyer's bills for his pains, saw it transferred

by rude hands from its place in his museum, to the residence of the grasping churchman. The huge fossil head experienced the fate of Dr. Chalmer's two hundred churches. Hoffmann was a philosopher, however, and he continued to observe and collect as before; but he never found such another fossil; and at length, in the midst of his ingenious labors, the vital energies failed within him, and he broke down and died. The useless canon lived on. The French Revolution broke out; the republican army invested Maestricht; the batteries were opened; and shot and shell fell thick on the devoted city. But in one especial quarter there alighted neither shot nor shell. All was safe around the canon's house. Ordinary relics would have availed him nothing in the circumstances—no not 'the Three Kings of Cologne,' had he possessed the three kings entire, or the jaw-bones of the 'eleven thousand virgins;' but there was virtue in the jaw-bones of the mosasaurus, and safety in their neighborhood. The French *savans*, like all the other *savans* of Europe, had heard of Hoffmann's fossil, and the French artillery had been directed to play wide of the place where it lay. Maestricht surrendered; the fossil was found secreted in a vault, and sent away to the *Jardin des Plantes* at Paris, maugre the canon, to delight there the heart of Cuvier; and the French, generously addressing themselves to the heirs of Hoffmann as its legitimate owners, made over to them a considerable sum of money as its price. They reversed the finding of the Maestricht judges; and all save the monks of St. Peter's have acquiesced in the justice of the decision."

This reminds us of an incident which once came to our knowledge. In Northern Ohio are valuable beds of limestone, blue, and gray, and shale—in which are found fossils of a very perfect and varied character—one locality having furnished over three hundred clearly defined specimens of encrinites, trilobites, univalves, &c., &c. In their several layers the deposits form a perfect record of their era. The quarryman finally became aware of the two-fold value of his building material, and carefully laid aside those blocks containing the coveted specimen. A gentleman wishing for a heavy set of steps went to the quarry, and decided upon the stone of a given layer. In working out the blocks a most magnificent *nest* of fossils was found right in the centre of the surface plane of the platform-stone. The

quarryman well knew its value, and ordered it aside. Another block was taken from the ledge, finished up, and delivered; but the gentleman insisted that he had ordered the especial piece of stone which had been set aside, and therefore refused to accept the substitute. A law-suit was the result, and the court sustained the quarryman!—a case of rare intelligence, for an ordinary "judge and jury" to comprehend the value of geologic fossils. The gentleman finally took the stone in controversy at the appraisement of a responsible geologist; and it now is regarded with as much interest by every intelligent visitor as an ordinary cabinet. That stone quarry is the goose of the golden egg to the shrewd owner, for he makes every customer pay extra for every well-developed specimen of the silurian era, which may be worked into sight.

THE London Society of Arts have awarded their medal for an invention applied to embossing wood. Raised figures upon wood, such as are employed in picture frames and other articles of ornamental cabinet work, are usually produced by means of carving, or by casting the pattern in plaster of Paris, or other composition, and cementing, or otherwise fixing it on the surface. The invention referred to differs from the modes named, and may be used either by itself, or in aid of covering—its operation depending on the fact, that if a depression be made by a blunt instrument on the surface of the wood, such depressed part will again rise to its original level by subsequent immersion in the water. The wood to be ornamented having been first worked out to its proposed shape, is in a state of adaptation to receive the drawing of the pattern; this being put on, a blunt steel tool, or burnisher, or die, is applied successively to all those parts of the pattern intended to be in relief, and, at the same time, is driven very cautiously, without breaking the grain of the wood, till the depth of the depression is equal to the intended prominence of the figures. The ground is then reduced by planing or filing to the level of the depressed part; after which, the piece of wood being placed in water, either hot or cold, the part previously depressed will rise to its former height, forming an embossed pattern, which may be finished by the usual operations of carving.